

Celtis africana

Sterkfontein Country Estate Mid-Winter 2017

Good day friends of the Celtis!

I know, it's been a long time since chatting to you and I was going to go on a lo-o-ong break, but then so many of you asked me where is the Celtis - you miss the stories, photos and jokes. Ah you guys – it is a lot of work! I first do a draft in Afrikaans, then translating it into English, doing spell-checks (and often being let down by the spellchecker as a certain word does exist, even though the wrong one was accidentally used!). Then picking photos, looking for clean jokes (THIS is very hard to find!) getting my unpaid assistant (my ever-loving hubby) to re-check everything and publish it... It takes a lot of time, but here goes!

When I go for very early walks, just after sunrise the veld certainly is beautiful. I know, during the day it looks quite boring but the early sun tinge the veldgrass with gold and it is so nice (even though it is quite nippy!) to hear all the birds. And looking at our wild aloes coming into bloom right now I was thinking to myself how lovely it is out here in the country!

Every year (and we can set our calendar by it!) before you can say Easter egg, the Thick-knees are suddenly around our courtyard area! Throughout the year we notice them in the veld, but as soon as Easter weekend arrives, they are around the house. They know exactly when it is time for my dogs to get their dinner, so they stand around waiting for a piece of bread! Joining them are the Crowned lapwings, Blacksmith lapwings, Grey Go-away birds and once even a hornbill came to see what the fuss was all about! Of course the normal dose of pigeons, finches, sparrows, weavers, starlings and the fiscals are also there for the daily feast. And let me now just be a little later than usual – the crowned lapwings will come and protest right at our backdoor at the top of their lungs!

Our Black-chested Snake Eagles are breeding again around a previous nesting site and it is so lovely that they still choose our Estate to nest. The problem is once again that this chick will be hatched when it is still very cold and food scarce. Let's hope it will survive!



SCE's Black-Chested Snake Eagle on its nest (Photo: Elmarie Krige)

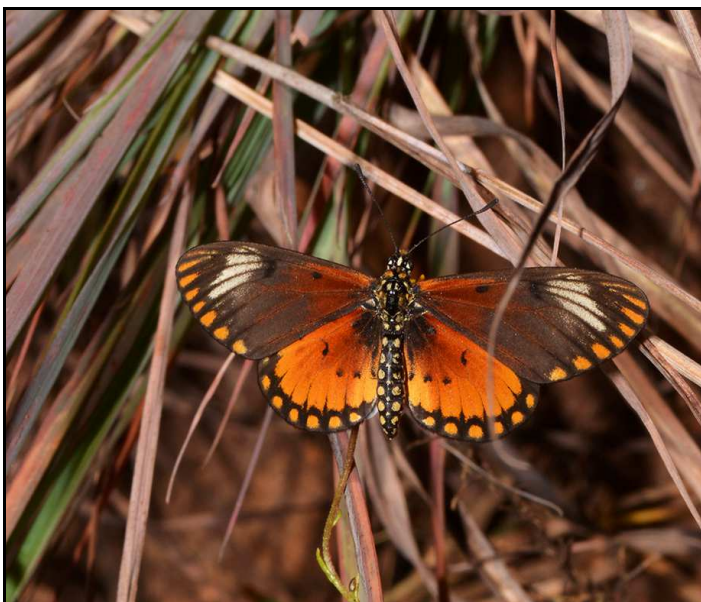
Some time ago I told you about Michael Van Harmelen (SCE157) spotting a Long-crested Eagle (*Lophaetus occipitalis*) near our vlei area at the entrance. Now Ryan Jeffrey (SCE133) spotted one on the Eskom line. Won't it just be fab if our Estate can become an eagle

haven? Ryan was nice enough to let me use a shot from the video for this letter – thanks dude! The photo is very small as it was taken with a cell phone, so we include a photo from Roberts' Bird Guide of Southern Africa so you can identify it easier - should you be lucky enough to see it. The Long-crested Eagle's habitat is moist, woody, vlei areas, bordering grassland. They nest on high treetops and feed mainly on rodents (especially vlei rats), frogs, insects, and reptiles. They often hunt from telephone poles.



(Left) A Long-crested Eagle photographed by Ryan Jeffrey (SCE133) sitting on an Eskom pole on Malmani Rd - note the characteristic crest on its head. (Right) A photo of a Long-crested Eagle courtesy Roberts Birds of South Africa VII, John Voelcker Birding Book Fund 2009

And because there is very little colour around, here are some beautiful photos Garfield took of butterflies. We really had so many species this summer, not just in our garden but in the veld as well. Apparently some species will, when there is a severe drought (like we have had recently) just not come out of the pupae phase, but instead stay dormant until the next rainy season! Isn't that just clever!



(Left) A female Dancing Acraea (*Telchinia serena*) (Afr. Kleinoranje-rooitjie) and (Right) the male, showing that in this instance, the female is a much prettier butterfly than the male (Photos: Garfield Krige)



Believe it or not, this is the same butterfly as in the previous two photos (Dancing Acraea). This time with its wings folded

[Recently spotted:](#)

Have a look in the Afrikaans section at the photo of the praying mantis devouring an insect – leaving debris on the flower as it is munching away!

Look at this amazing photo of a wasp's nest – it is so hidden and well camouflaged, it actually looks like the plant it is attached to! So next time you walk in the veld and get stung by one of these okes – don't wonder where the heck the wasp comes from – you just may have, unknowingly, disturbed it's nest!



Well-camouflaged wasp nest in the veld (Photo: Garfield Krige)

And, as always, just for a laugh:

A friend of mine who lives in Olifantshoek (Northern Cape) sent me a picture of a sign. This was put up at a garage in town, which also serves as a truck stop and bus stop, and it says it all! Somebody got fed-up and it is really funny and original – so men, beware!



So, despite SA being downgraded to junk status, our economy officially in recession, despite crime going on, despite gossip, pettiness, jealousy, the price of biltong; despite poverty and the high cost of living and people often feeling hopeless, there is always beautiful nature! You don't need to be a "greenie", just enjoy it and till next time, whenever that may be, stay warm!

Goeie dag al die Celtis vriende!

Ek het lanklaas met julle gesels en was vas van plan om sommer 'n la-a-ang breek te neem, maar toe het 'n hele paar van julle my gevra waar is die Celtis dan. Julle mis dan die stories, foto's, inligting en grappies, maar, ai dis baie werk. Ek doen eers net 'n rowwe opsomming in Afrikaans, moet dan vertaal in Engels, spelling nagaan (en hier word ek maar goed beduiwel met die liewe speltoetsers, want sommige woorde word dieselfde gespel maar het verskillende betekenis, so dit glip soms verby my arendsoë!). Dan moet foto's uitgesoek word, groottes verander word en ek moet probeer om skoon grappies te kry (DIT is amper die moeilikste van alles om te kry!) my onbetaalde slaaf (die liewe anderhelfte!) moet alles nagaan en dit publiseer... Dis regtig 'n klomp werk, maar goed dan, hier gaan ons!

Dis vir my so mooi as ek vroeg net na sonsopkoms met my honde gaan stap. Daardie tyd van die oggend word die gras goud getint en met ons wilde aalwyne wat nou oral begin blom is dit regtig so mooi. En ten spyte van die ysige luggie is die voëls heel vrolik aan die gang! Dis darem net lekker om buite die stad te kan woon.

Ons weet al, sonder om eers op die kalender te kyk Paasnaweek is hier! Voor ons nog kan paaseier sê is die dikkoppe skielik laatmiddag naby ons huis op wag vir my om die honde aandete te gee. Veldkossies raak maar skaars en hulle is hier om 'n stukkie brood te kom kry. Deur die jaar is hul oral in die veld op ons plot, maar laat Paasnaweek nou net aanbreek, dan is hulle hier! Die kroonkiewiete en die bontkiewiete, Grys Loeries en eenkeer selfs 'n neushoringvoël kom ding mee vir 'n happie. En laat ek nou net bietjie later as gewoonlik kom, die kroonkiewiete kom verskree my kliphard reg by die agterdeur! Natuurlik is daar maar die gewone mossies, duiwe en vinke, die wewers en sprees en selfs die laksmanne wat altyd iets te ete kom soek.

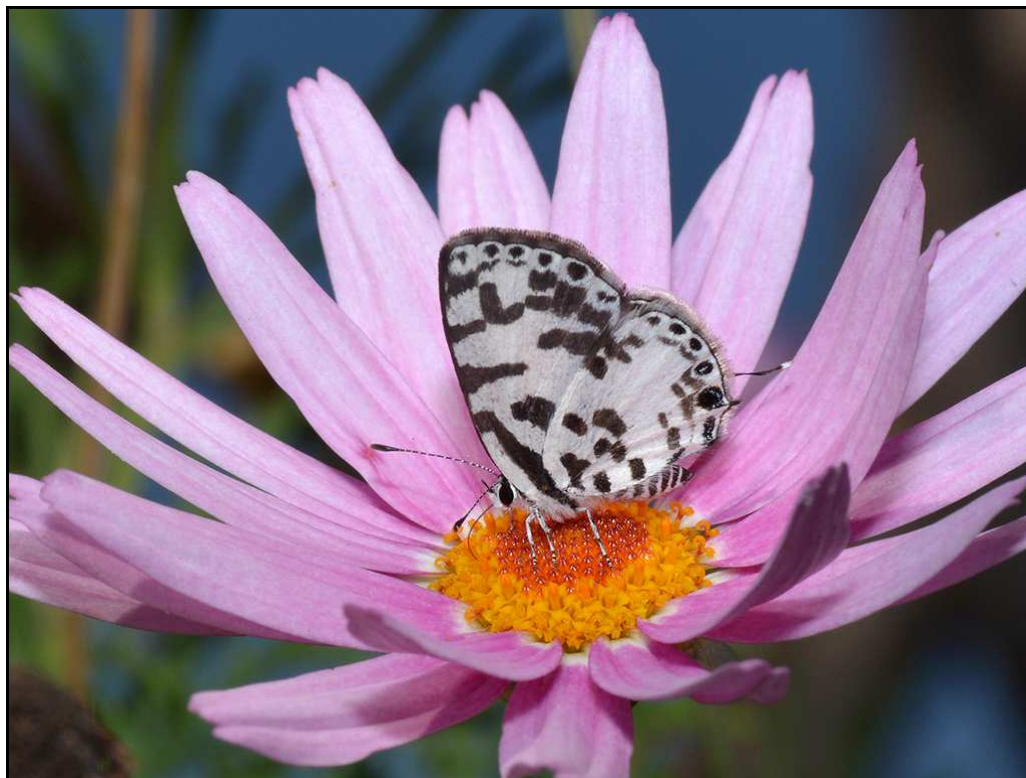
Goeie nuus is dat ons Swartborsslangarende weer besig is om te broei naby 'n vorige broei area! Die probleem is natuurlik dat die kleintjie sal uitbroei wanneer dit nog ysig is en kos maar min. So ek hou maar duimvas die kleintjie sal wel oorleef.

Ander lekker nuus: so 'n ruk gelede het ek julle vertel dat Michael Van Harmelen (SCE157) 'n Langkuifarend (*Lophaetus occipitalis*) naby die vlei-area by die ingang opgemerk het. Nou het Ryan Jeffrey (SCE133) 'n video geneem van een op 'n Eskompaal. Hy was gaaf genoeg om toestemming te gee dat ek 'n skoot uit die video mag gebruik – dankie ou! Sal dit nou nie bakgat wees as ons Estate 'n blyplek van sommer heelwat arendspesies word nie! Die foto is maar klein want dis per selfoon geneem so ek sluit ook 'n foto uit Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa in sodat julle kan uitkyk as julle dit dalk sien.

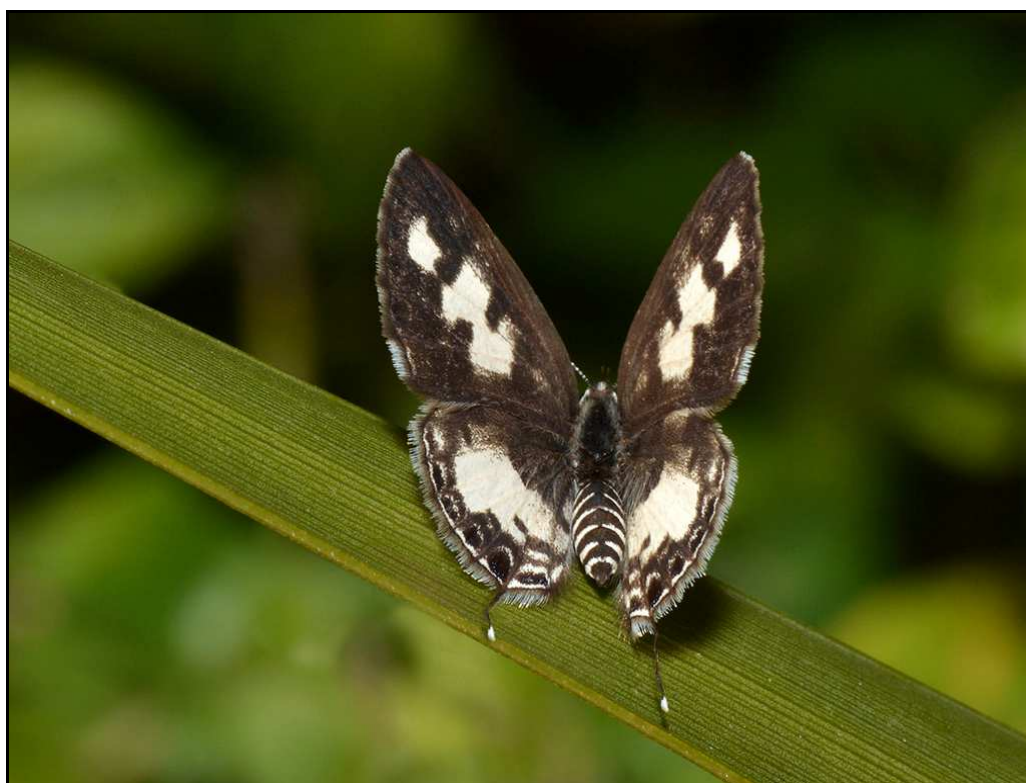
Die Langkuifarend se habitat is klam boomveld, veral met aangrensende grasveld en vlei-areas. Hulle vreet hoofsaaklik knaagdiers en veral vleirotte, sowel as paddas, insekte en reptiele. Hulle maak nes in die blaredak van baie hoë bome en jag gereeld vanaf telefoonpale. Sien foto's in die Engelse gedeelte.

Siende dat dit hierdie tyd van die jaar maar taamlik vaal is, wat van 'n paar pragfoto's van skoenlappers wat Garfield geneem het! Hierdie seisoen het ons omtrent 'n

verskeidenheid opgemerk – nie net in ons tuin nie, maar ook in die veld. Blykbaar is daar spesies wat, as daar erge droogte is (soos wat ons onlangs beleef het) eenvoudig nie uit die papiestadium kom nie, maar dormant bly totdat die eerste goeie reëns geval het en dan eers uitbroei! Is dit nou nie oulik en slim nie!

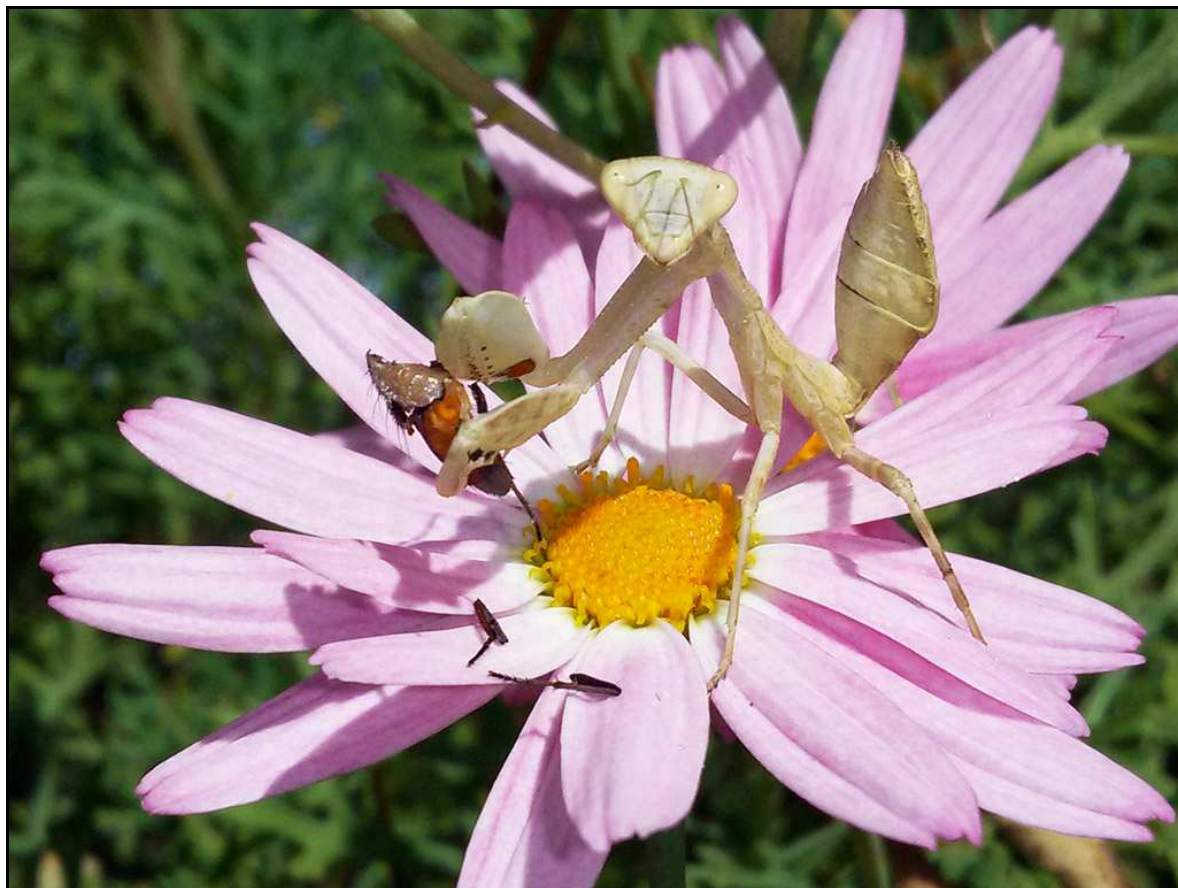


(Bo) 'n Swart-bontetjie skoelapper (*Tuxentius melaena melaena*) (Eng. Black Pie) met toe vlerke en (Onder) die bokant van dieselfde skoelapper (Fotos: Garfield Krige)



Onlangs raakgesien:

Kyk bietjie hierdie hottentotsgot – besig om een of ander insek te vreet dat die stukkie bene en goed sommer rondlê op die blom!



Hottentotsgot besig om sy prooi te verslind - kyk hoe lê die stukke onder hom op die blom rond!
(Selfoonfoto: Garfield Krige)

Bo, in die Engelse gedeelte is 'n ongelooflike foto van 'n perdebynes in die veld! Dit is so uitstekend gekamoefleer dit lyk nes die droë plant waaraan dit vasgeheg is! So volgende keer as jy in die veld stap en jy word skielik deur een van die kêrels gesteeek, moenie wonder waar op aarde dit vandaan kom nie - jy het dalk onwetend 'n nes versteur!

Soos altyd, net vir die grap:

Die seuntjie wil 'n budjie koop en kom by die oom en vra wat kos die budjies. Die oom sê, "R5.00 boet".

Outjie: "Ek wil asseblief die blouê hê oom."

Oom: "Luister boetman, die hok is vol budjies en almal is R5.00 elk, ek gaan nie die blouê probeer vang nie, jy sal maar moet vat wat ek eerste kan vang."

Die seuntjie hou aan hy wil die blouê hê. Hy sien die oom vererg hom en sê: "Oom ek sal jou betaal wat my pa vir 'n skaap betaal."

Baie vinnig gryp die oom sy vangnet en met 'n groot gesukkel kry hy die blouê gevang en in die proses skryf hy nog 'n paar ander budjies af ook. Hy sit die budjie in 'n sakkie en gee vir die outjie.

Oom: “Hoeveel betaal jou pa vir ‘n skaap boet?”

Seun: “R35.00 ‘n kilogram oom. Sal oom ‘seblief die budjie weeg?”

Al is SA afgegradeer na rommelstatus, ons ekonomie amptelik in resessie en ten spyte van voortdurende misdaad, skinderstories, afguns, jaloesie en die prys van biltong; ten spyte van die hoë lewenskoste, armoede en mense wat soms hoop verloor – onthou daar is nog altyd die mooie natuur! So, mens hoef nie ‘n “groenie” te wees nie, geniet dit en tot ek weer, wanneer-ookal, met julle gesels, geniet dit en bly warm!

Totsiens, goodbye, adios, ciao, yia sas en do svidaniya!



References/Verwysings: Grobler, A
Roberts Voëlgids - Hugh Chittenden